

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 COME-00 OMB-01 OPIC-03 TRSE-00
SS-15 NSC-05 SP-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DOE-11
SOE-02 INT-05 EUR-12 /082 W
-----086162 290329Z /66

R 300145Z JAN 78
FM USLO PEKING
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9766
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 PEKING 0267

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: BEXP CH
SUBJ: US COMMERCIAL OBJECTIVES IN CHINA DURING 1978

REF: STATE 14670

1. SUMMARY. WE THINK IT IS TIMELY TO REVIEW US COMMERCIAL
ACTIVITIES IN CHINA IN LIGHT OF EVIDENCE THAT THE CHINESE ARE
LAYING PLANS FOR SUBSTANTIAL PURCHASES OF FOREIGN PLANT AND
EQUIPMENT THIS YEAR AND CONTINUING THROUGH THE SIXTH FIVE YEAR
PLAN PERIOD (1981-1985). AMERICAN FIRMS FACE STILL COMPETITION
IN THIS MARKET, PARTICULARLY FROM JAPAN. POSSIBILITIES FOR
DIRECT USG EFFORTS TO PROMOTE US EXPORTS TO THE PRC ARE
LIMITED AND ARE HAMPERED BY LACK OF FULL NORMALIZATION IN THE
POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC AREAS. NEVERTHELESS, WE FEEL
THERE ARE SOME OPPORTUNITIES FOR A HIGHER LEVEL OF COMMERCIAL
ACTIVITY BY USG AND AMERICAN FIRMS. WE RECOMMEND THAT USG
(A) CONTINUE EFFORTS TO DEFINE POLICY ON TECHNICAL
TRANSFER TO CHINA AND TO IMPROVE THE ADMINISTRATION
OF EXPORT CONTROL; (B) STEP UP EFFORTS TO ASSIST US
FIRMS IN IDENTIFYING PRODUCTS WITH BEST EXPORT POTENTIAL
TO THE PRC; AND (C) ACTIVELY PROMOTE THE EXCHANGE OF
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TRADE DELEGATIONS IN HIGH PRIORITY AREAS SUCH AS
TRANSPORT, NON-FERROUS METALS AND CHEMICALS. IN ADDITION
USLO SHOULD CONTINUE TO IMPROVE BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES.
END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE TO AMBASSADORS (REFTEL) CALLING
FOR INCREASED ATTENTION TO TRADE EXPANSION

PROVIDES A PARTICULARLY TIMELY IMPETUS TO REVIEW OUR COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES IN THE PRC. IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS, CHINESE LEADERS HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY SPECIFIC -- BOTH PUBLICLY AND IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS -- ABOUT THE PRC'S ECONOMIC PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS. PLANNING IS APPARENTLY UNDERWAY FOR A FAIRLY COMPREHENSIVE EXPANSION OF CHINESE INDUSTRY DURING THE SIXTH FIVE YEAR PLAN PERIOD (1981-1985). THE IDEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNING FOR INCREASED FOREIGN TRADE HAS ALREADY BEEN ACHIEVED (SEE PEKING 2788, 1977). THERE IS AN IMMEDIATE NEED FOR LARGE INVESTMENTS IN CHINA'S BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE. THE PRIORITIES ARE: ELECTRIC POWER GENERATION, STEEL PRODUCTION AND OTHER METALLURGICAL INDUSTRIES, PETROLEUM DEVELOPMENT (BOTH EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION), MINING AND TRANSPORT (RAIL, TRUCK AND PORT FACILITIES). OTHER IMPORTANT AREAS, BUT WITH SOMEWHAT LOWER PRIORITY, ARE CHEMICALS (INCLUDING CHEMICAL FERTILIZER AND OTHER PETROCHEMICALS), COMMUNICATIONS AND ELECTRONICS AND SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTATION. THE CHINESE HAVE HINTED THAT THE WHOLE PLANT PURCHASE PROGRAM WILL RESUME THIS YEAR. NEGOTIATIONS ARE PROBABLY ALREADY UNDERWAY IN A FEW HIGH PRIORITY AREAS. WE EXPECT SOME WHOLE PLANT CONTRACTS WILL BE SIGNED IN THE SECOND HALF OF THIS YEAR.

3. POTENTIAL MAGNITUDE OF PURCHASES. THE PRC ENJOYED
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SIZABLE SURPLUSES ON CURRENT ACCOUNT IN BOTH 1976 AND 1977. WE NOTE THAT THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR US-CHINA TRADE (NCUSCT) RECENTLY FORECAST THAT THE PRC WILL HAVE BETWEEN \$3 BILLION AND \$7.4 BILLION AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE OF WESTERN PLANT AND EQUIPMENT IN THE THREE YEAR PERIOD 1978 TO 1980 (SEE CBR, NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1977, PAGE 42). THIS PROJECTION TOOK INTO ACCOUNT PRC'S ANTICIPATED EXPORT GROWTH, CURRENT DEBT SERVICE OBLIGATIONS, PROBABLY FUTURE DEBT SERVICE RATIO AND ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL GRAIN PURCHASES. THE ESTIMATES MAY BE CONSERVATIVE IN THAT THEY DID NOT INCLUDE POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE SUCH AS FOREIGN BANK DEPOSITS IN THE BANK OF CHINA AND HIGHER EARNINGS FROM TOURISM AND REMITTANCES.

4. US COMPETITIVE POSITION. US EXPORTS TO THE PRC ARE HAMPERED TO SOME EXTENT BY THE LACK OF FULL POLITICAL NORMALIZATION AND BY VARIOUS INSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS AFFECTING TRADE SUCH AS EXPORT CONTROL, THE ABSENCE OF NORMAL BANKING RELATIONS, AND THE LACK OF FLEXIBILITY IN FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS. IN ADDITION, US BUSINESSMEN AS A GROUP SEEM

LESS KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT CHINA THAN OUR JAPANESE AND EUROPEAN COMPETITORS. CONCERNING THE LACK OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, CHINESE OFFICIALS SOMETIMES MENTION THIS AS A HANDICAP TO BILATERAL TRADE, AND IN A FEW CASES CHINESE TRADING CORPORATIONS MAY FAVOR COMPETITIVE EUROPEAN OR JAPANESE PRODUCTS OVER AMERICAN. IN SENATOR KENNEDY'S RECENT MEETING OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. HOWEVER, HE ALSO SAID CHINESE PURCHASE DECISIONS ARE MADE ON THE BASIS OF THREE CRITERIA: PRICE, QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY FOR DELIVERY. WE BELIEVE THESE CRITERIA ARE MORE IMPORTANT FOR US EXPORTS TO CHINA THAN THE ABSENCE OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

5. PERHAPS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE INSTITUTIONAL

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NOTE BY OC/T: TEXT OF PARAGRAPH 4 AS RECEIVED.

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SS-15 NSC-05 SP-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DOE-11

SOE-02 INT-05 EUR-12 /082 W

-----086169 290330Z /66

R 300145Z JAN 78

FM USLO PEKING

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PROBLEMS IS THE CURRENT INTENSE COMPETITION FOR SALES TO CHINA. WE FACE PARTICULARLY STRONG COMPETITION FROM JAPAN DUE TO THAT COUNTRY'S PROXIMITY, CULTURAL AFFINITY AND WELL-ESTABLISHED TRADE TIES WITH CHINA, AS WELL AS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF COMPLEMENTARITY IN THE TWO COUNTRIES' ECONOMIES. THE JAPANESE HAVE BEEN VERY ACTIVE HERE IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS

AND SEEM DETERMINED TO "LOCK UP" AS MUCH BUSINESS AS POSSIBLE DURING THIS PERIOD BEFORE US AND EUROPEAN FIRMS CAN GET INVOLVED; IN THIS EFFORT IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT THE JAPANESE APPEAR TO BE TAKING THE US VERY SERIOUSLY AS A COMPETITOR. SIGNING OF THE LONG-TERM SINO-JAPANESE TRADE AGREEMENT, NOW EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE IN MID-FEBRUARY, WILL OPEN THE WAY FOR INCREASED JAPANESE TRADE. THE AGREEMENT WILL CONTAIN THE LEVELS OF PETROLEUM AND COAL JAPAN IS COMMITTED TO BUY FROM CHINA OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS. THIS IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO PEKING, BECAUSE THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP PLANS TO RELY HEAVILY ON INCREASED EXPORTS OF OIL (AND TO A LESSER EXTENT COAL) TO FINANCE PLANT AND EQUIPMENT IMPORTS FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS. SPECIFICATION OF CHINESE OIL AND COAL EXPORTS WILL PERMIT CHINESE TO ESTIMATE FOREIGN EXCHANGE AVAILABILITIES MORE PRECISELY AND DRAW UP CONCRETE IMPORT PLANS.

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6. THE EUROPEANS HAVE ALSO BEEN ACTIVE. BOTH THE BRITISH AND FRENCH HAVE BEEN TRYING TO CAPITALIZE ON THE OPPORTUNITIES OPENED BY FOREIGN TRADE MINISTER LI CHIANG'S VISIT TO THOSE COUNTRIES IN DECEMBER. THE FRENCH USED THE OPPORTUNITY OF PRIME MINISTER BARRE'S RECENT VISIT TO PRESS THE CHINESE ON THE CURRENT IMBALANCE IN FRANCO-CHINESE TRADE; THE FRENCH (AND OTHER EUROPEANS) ARE ALSO ORGANIZING TRADE DELEGATIONS IN VARIOUS KEY AREAS. THE GERMANS, ITALIANS AND -- TO A LESSER EXTENT -- OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ARE ALL TRYING TO STRENGTHEN TRADE TIES. EFFORTS BY EUROPEAN BUSINESSMEN ARE BEING FULLY SUPPORTED BY THEIR GOVERNMENTS; FOR EXAMPLE, BILATERAL TRADE WAS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF FRG FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER'S VISIT LAST FALL AS WELL AS BARRE'S VISIT THIS MONTH.

7. DESPITE THE VARIOUS HANDICAPS ALREADY NOTED, WE BELIEVE THE CHINESE WOULD WELCOME INCREASED TRADE TIES WITH THE US AND WILL BE MORE RECEPTIVE TO PROPOSALS BY US FIRMS THAN IN THE RECENT PAST. WE BELIEVE THAT THE CHINESE HAVE A GENERAL AWARENESS OF THE QUALITY OF AMERICAN EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY, AND IN SOME CASES MAY BE MORE WILLING THAN OTHER LDC'S TO PAY A PREMIUM TO OBTAIN IT. HOWEVER, WE FEEL THAT THE CHINESE FOREIGN TRADE CORPORATIONS, INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES AND END-USERS ARE NOT FULLY KNOWLEDGEABLE OF US CAPABILITIES IN MANY SPECIFIC PRODUCT LINES. EFFORTS ON OUR PART ARE NEEDED TO OFFSET THIS. THE CHINESE MAY INTERPRET LOW LEVEL OF US ACTIVITY IN THIS PERIOD AS LACK OF INTEREST. IT IS NOT THE CHINESE STYLE TO SEEK OUT FOREIGN FIRMS IN THE FIRST INSTANCE. TWO CLICHES ABOUT ACHIEVING SUCCESS IN THE CHINA TRADE -- THE NEED FOR PERSISTENT EFFORT AND EVIDENCE OF A SINCERE DESIRE ON THE PART OF THE FOREIGN BUSINESSMAN TO TRADE WITH THE PRC -- CONTINUE TO APPLY. THE RECENT SALE OF AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT BY

THE JOHN DEERE COMPANY IS A CASE IN POINT.

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8. CONCRETE STEPS THAT USG CAN TAKE TO INCREASE US EXPORTS ARE RELATIVELY LIMITED. HOWEVER, WE SEE THREE GENERAL AREAS WHERE THE USG CAN ACT TO PROMOTE BETTER BILATERAL COMMERCIAL RELATIONS THIS YEAR: EXPORT CONTROL, IDENTIFICATION OF EXPORTS WITH HIGH POTENTIAL, AND TRADE DELEGATIONS. EACH OF THESE IS DEALT WITH BELOW. AS FAR AS THIS POST IS CONCERNED, WE ARE CONTINUING OUR EFFORTS TO INCREASE OUR CONTRACTS WITH THE FOREIGN TRADE MINISTRY, THE FOREIGN TRADE CORPORATIONS AND SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE CCPIT AND THE BANK OF CHINA. ALSO, WE ARE ENDEAVORING TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF USLO'S SERVICES TO US BUSINESSMEN VISITING THE PRC. IN THIS REGARD, WE PLAN TO OPEN DURING THE FIRST HALF OF 1978 A SMALL OFFICE FOR BUSINESS VISITORS, CONTAINING EQUIPMENT FUNDED BY USDOC.

9. TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER. THE CHINESE HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY VOCAL IN EXPRESSING DISSATISFACTION WITH US EXPORT CONTROLS AND THE LEADING US ROLE IN COCOM. THEY APPARENTLY VIEW THESE CONTROLS AS A SIGNIFICANT BARRIER TO THEIR EFFORTS TO OBTAIN MODERN TECHNOLOGY. OF COURSE, PEKING HAS SHOWN SOME FLEXIBILITY IN MEETING US END-USE REQUIREMENTS FOR SOME TYPES OF SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT NOT OBTAINABLE ELSEWHERE. HOWEVER, LACK OF AGREEMENT WITH THE USG AS TO THE TYPES OF EQUIPMENT WE ARE PREPARED TO SELL TO THE PRC, THE CONDITIONS TO BE ATTACHED, AND THE FREQUENT DELAYS IN LICENSE ISSUANCE

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SOE-02 INT-05 EUR-12 /082 W

-----086216 290327Z /66

R 300145Z JAN 78

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ARE SIGNIFICANTLY HAMPERING THE US COMPETITIVE POSITION.
ARTICULATION OF US POLICY IN THIS AREA SHOULD ENHANCE THE
PROSPECTS FOR DIALOGUE WITH THE CHINESE ON TRADE ISSUES, OR
AT LAST PERMIT US TO RESPOND MORE COHERENTLY TO THEIR
COMPLAINTS ABOUT EXCON.

10. MARKET POTENTIAL. WE RECOMMEND THAT THE USDOC REVIEW
THOSE AREAS WHERE THE CHINESE HAVE INDICATED THEY WILL
CONCENTRATE INVESTMENT, IN AN ATTEMPT TO DEFINE MORE PRECISELY
THE TYPES OF EQUIPMENT NEEDED AND DETERMINE WHAT TYPES
OF EQUIPMENT US FIRMS WOULD BE MOST COMPETITIVE IN. IN SOME
CASES, USDOC MAY WISH TO ALERT SPECIFIC US FIRMS.

11. DELEGATIONS. THE CHINESE APPEAR TO FAVOR THIS FORM
OF COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY; IN LATE SUMMER AND FALL 1977, THE
PRC EXCHANGED AT LEAST 30 TRADE-RELATED DELEGATIONS
WITH JAPAN ALONE. WE WERE IMPRESSED BY THE ALACRITY WITH
WHICH THE CHINESE ACCEPTED THE DOE INVITATION TO THE PETROLEUM
DELEGATION AND THE HIGH LEVEL OF THE DELEGATION. WE
BELIEVE THE USG, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE NCUSC, SHOULD
FACILITATE MORE EXCHANGES OF DELEGATIONS THIS YEAR, AND WE
THINK THE CHINESE WILL BE RECEPTIVE. ALTHOUGH VISITS BOTH WAYS ARE
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USEFUL, CHINESE VISITS TO THE US ARE RELATIVELY MORE
PRODUCTIVE, BECAUSE THE VISITORS CAN BE EXPOSED DIRECTLY TO
US TECHNOLOGY AND CHINESE ACCEPTANCE USUALLY INDICATES
SERIOUS INTEREST. IT WOULD FREQUENTLY BE ADVANTAGEOUS FOR
USLO TO TENDER INVITATIONS DIRECTLY TO THE OFFICES CONCERNED
ON BEHALF OF USG AGENCIES OR THE NATIONAL COUNCIL, RATHER
THAN CHANNELING ALL THESE THROUGH THE PRCLO. THE OBVIOUS
ADVANTAGE IS THAT USLO CAN TRANSMIT THE INVITATION DIRECTLY
TO THE ENTITY BEING INVITED, AND CAN FOLLOW UP DIRECTLY, AS
APPROPRIATE. WE BELIEVE DIRECT USLO CONTACT WITH THE MINISTRIES
INVOLVED MAY OFTEN BE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN COMMUNICATIONS
FILTERED THROUGH THE CHINESE BUREAUCRACY.

12. SPECIFIC DELEGATIONS. IN OUR VIEW, THE FOLLOWING TYPES
OF DELEGATIONS WOULD BE MOST PRODUCTIVE IN TERMS OF CHINESE
NEEDS AND THE US COMPETITIVE POSITION (WE ARE THINKING
PRIMARILY IN TERMS OF VISITS TO THE US):
--RAILROAD TECHNOLOGY. GOOD POTENTIAL FOR SALE OF
SIGNALING, MARSHALLING AND RELATED EQUIPMENT. SOMEWHAT LOWER
POTENTIAL FOR SALES OF DIESEL LOCOMOTIVES. STRONG COMPETITION
FROM JAPAN IN THIS AREA. SUGGEST THAT A "RAIL TECHNOLOGY

STUDY DELEGATION" BE INVITED TO THE US THIS YEAR, PERHAPS
UNDER DOT AUSPICES.

--TRUCK TECHNOLOGY. POTENTIAL TO SELL TRUCK AND
ACCESSORY MANUFACTURING FACILITIES -- NOT FINISHED TRUCKS.
ALSO AUTOTIVE ACCESSORIES SUCH AS TIRES AND SPECIAL PURPOSE
VEHICLES FOR MINING AND OTHER APPLICATIONS. NATIONAL
COUNCIL COULD HOST A DELEGATION, PERHAPS IN CONJUNCTION WITH
THE NATIONAL TRUCK SHOW IF ROC PARTICIPANTS WON'T BE PRESENT.
--PORT FACILITIES AND MATERIAL HANDLING, INCLUDING
CONTAINERIZATION. NCUSCT COULD SPONSOR.
--NON-FERROUS METALS FABRICATING. NCUSCT OR TRADE
ASSOCIATION SPONSORSHIP.
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--CHEMICAL MANUFACTURING. NCUSCT OR TRADE ASSOCIATION SPONSOR-
SHIP.
--MINING EQUIPMENT. INVITE A GROUP TO US TO FOLLOW
UP ON SUCCESSFUL NCUSCT-ORGANIZED MINING DELEGATION TO CHINA.
USG OR NCUSCT SPONSORSHIP.
--LIVESTOCK RAISING AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY. USDA SPONSORSHIP.

13. OTHER AREAS FOR POSSIBLE DELEGATIONS, UNDER NCUSCT OR
RELAVANT TRADE ASSOCIATION SPONSORSHIP: FOOD PROCESSING AND
REFRIGERATION EQUIPMENT, COMMUNICATIONS (INCLUDING RADIO AND
TELEVISION BROADCASTING), ELECTRONICS, TEXTILE EQUIPMENT,
PLASTICS, SOIL RECLAMATION, POLLUTION CONTROL, AND PAPER
PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY.

14. WE HAVE NOT PROPOSED ANY DELEGATIONS IN STEEL BECAUSE WE
ASSUME THE US WOULD NOT BE COMPETITIVE IN THIS AREA. ALSO,
PETROLEUM EQUIPMENT SEEMS TO BE ADEQUATELY COVERED ALREADY;
HOWEVER, WE SHOULD NOT ASSUME THAT THE JAPANESE AND FRENCH ARE
GOING TO LET US HAVE THIS FIELD TO OURSELVES.

15. THE ABOVE IDEAS DO NOT, OF COURSE, EXHAUST THE
POSSIBILITIES. AMBASSADOR WOODCOCK WILL BE IN WASHINGTON IN
EARLY FEBRUARY AND WOULD BE PLEASED TO DISCUSS US COMMERCIAL
STRATEGY WITH DEPARTMENT, COMMERCE AND NCUSCT OFFICIALS.
WOODCOCK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978PEKING00267
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780044-0034
Format: TEL
From: PEKING
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978018/aaaaagau.tel
Line Count: 375
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 1aa1eae4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 14670
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3798595
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US COMMERCIAL OBJECTIVES IN CHINA DURING 1978
TAGS: BEXP, CH
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/1aa1eae4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014